

1997-1998 BLUE RIBBON SCHOOLS PROGRAM

Name of Principal: Mr. Bill Weirich

Name of School: John A. Rowland High School

School Address: 2000 S. Otterbein
Rowland Heights, CA 91748

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Part III - SUMMARY

At first glance, John A. Rowland High School, located in Rowland Heights, California, appears to be a traditional public high school. Yet when you enter the campus, you begin to notice subtle differences in the way this school "feels." It soon becomes clear that you won't find "business as usual" here. There is a clear culture of excellence. High expectations abound with a rich and challenging instructional program and a supportive environment in which all students can find success. You see evidence of this success in students' work, in the interactions between staff and students and in the everyday operations of the school.

John A. Rowland High School is part of the Rowland Unified School District in Southern California. It is located in the unincorporated community of Rowland Heights, twenty miles east of Los Angeles. This school serves 2,521 ninth through twelfth grade students from diverse ethnic, cultural, linguistic, and economic backgrounds. The ethnic/racial population is composed of 35% Asian, 6% African American, 30% Hispanic, 9% Filipino, and 20% White. There are students from over 16 different language backgrounds including recent Asian and Spanish speaking immigrants. Student turnover each year is roughly 28%. The school serves a mixed population of low to upper middle income families. Most students come from small family residences, apartments, or government subsidized housing; others come from more affluent homes.

The school sits on a 44-acre parcel of land in a residential neighborhood. It was built in 1964, but has been renovated several times over the past 33 years. Renovation projects have included expansions of the gymnasium, library and stadium and the addition of portable classrooms for increased enrollment. Most currently, the school has been completely wired for Internet access.

The staff at Rowland High includes a principal, assistant principal, 3 vice-principals, 5 counselors, a nurse and a librarian. There are 89 full-time classroom teachers including special education teachers in resource, special day, and severely handicapped classes. Six Regional Occupation Program teachers complement our school focus with school-to-career links. Teachers are organized by department content areas as well as interdisciplinary focus groups, a model which provides for involvement of staff in the organizational operation of the school. To support our students and programs, we also employ 5 campus peace officers and 18 instructional aides.

During the last five years, staff members have worked together in a concerted effort to create an excellent environment. With the vision of the principal and teacher leaders, and the commitment of the total staff, many changes have taken place. The school-to-career programs, the interdisciplinary links, the work we have accomplished with alternative assessment have each been driven by our firm desire to remain student-centered and focused on excellence. Our staff works together as a team. Extensive staff development along with collegial planning and a climate that supports excellence, change, and professional growth have resulted in continued improvements at Rowland High School.

There are many factors that contribute to Rowland High's effectiveness, including commitment to a shared vision demonstrated in our Expected Schoolwide Learning Results, high expectations for

staff and students, quality leadership, a skilled and capable staff, a culture which contributes to goal accomplishment, collaboration with parents and community to serve student needs, ongoing formal and informal evaluation, and the willingness to adapt and make changes which will enhance and improve programs. Through our focus groups and department meetings, staff share ideas based upon research about teaching and learning: that students learn best in an active learning environment in which the teacher is a facilitator of learning; that authentic learning can be demonstrated through a variety of projects and products; that all students bring their own unique strengths, talents, perspectives, and prior experiences to learning, and that this diversity greatly enriches the classroom. There are also core values that permeate the school: a belief that excellence is worth working for, a commitment to quality, integrity, democratic ideals, and respect for others.

These ideas have resulted in high quality instructional programs. The curriculum is rich and challenging. Learning is an exciting adventure, rather than a tedious exercise. Students actively explore critical ideas by doing: by creating, constructing, designing, producing, and performing. Critical thinking skills are stressed, and open-ended questions and various forms of communication are emphasized across the curriculum. Student outcomes are demonstrated in many ways, through projects, presentations, activities, and portfolios to name a few. There is an atmosphere that encourages student creativity and challenges students to reach their highest potential.

Technology is an integral part of this learning environment. Rowland High utilizes the rich resources that technology offers. Teachers use technology to bring the world into the classroom. Computers, distance learning, interactive multimedia, and video allow students to learn, work and produce in different ways, and to acquire technology skills that they will use throughout their lives. Technology has allowed us to create partnerships with the business community through the use of our V-TEL link to Warner Bros. Studio and the Cal State University System. Rowland High also uses technology to communicate with parents in new ways through the computerized Homework Hotline, through the local public access cable channel, and through our school web page.

Rowland High School programs are student-centered, and focus on student needs. Staff members recognize the unique needs of our multiethnic population. They provide a nurturing environment where students have an opportunity to explore and excel. Staff members work with parents, business, and community agencies to provide a range of services that meet the needs of students and families.

There is a clean, safe, orderly environment at Rowland High School. Although the physical plant is older, buildings and grounds are well-maintained. They reflect the pride students and staff feel in the school, and the core values of respect for each other and the environment and responsibility to contribute in positive ways.

Rowland High School is a school that gets results. Rowland High was chosen as a California Distinguished School in 1996 and was one of 100 original schools chosen to participate in California's High School Partnership program. Test scores are strong across the curriculum.

Staff members have won awards for professional excellence. Rowland students routinely win or place in a variety of regional, state, and national level academic competitions. Students in all areas of the performing arts and other curricular activities are recognized for group or individual accomplishments. All indicators point to the effectiveness of programs: student and staff attendance rates are high, disciplinary infractions are low, and surveys of parents, students, and staff reveal high levels of satisfaction with Rowland programs. Staff and student achievement is recognized and celebrated.

We believe that Rowland High School provides an excellent program for all students, and clearly addresses the National Education Goals in a high quality manner.